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**Online Anti-brand Communities in Korea**

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**Online Anti-brand Communities in Korea**

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## **Abstract**

### **Online Anti-brand Communities in Korea**

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This paper attempts to explore the nature of the online anti-brand communities in South Korea. The current state of the online anti-brand communities is discovered with regards to different kinds of online platforms and the categories of targeted products and services. Case analyses of three popular anti-brand communities were conducted to discover how dissatisfied consumers form a group, interact with other consumers, and generate group actions. Specific details of consumer interactions and collective actions in the online anti-brand communities provide some managerial implications of how to effectively react to the anti-brand movement.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

With the increasing importance of consumer-brand relationships (Fournier, 1998; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001), advertising practitioners and researchers are paying attention to brand communities (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002). A brand community is defined as "a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p.423)." In these communities, consumers gather together to interact with other consumers who share common ideas about a particular branded product or service. Positive attitudes toward the brand and brand loyalty can be increased while at the same time perception of brand value can be enhanced through consumers' participation or commitment in the community (Jang, Olfman, Ko, Koh, & Kim, 2008).

Changes in communications and information technologies have opened new online communication channels to consumers and enabled them to exchange valuable information without geographical limitations and/or time zones (Johnson, 2001). Shopping, chatting, and news readings are the fastest growing activities among U.S. users in the online environment (Patwardhan & Yang, 2003). In addition, over a million chatters host thousands of chat rooms daily (Palm Coast/Flagler Internet 2000), showing the growing popularity of instant messaging and related forms of chatting online (Pastore, 2001). In this context, online brand communities are meaningful to both consumers and companies. Consumers become more empowered through information exchanges and companies obtain real time feedback about the brands (Kim & Bae, 2008).

While positive aspects of active and empowered consumers have been emphasized in previous research on online brand communities, negative sides of this emerging trend should not be neglected. These empowered consumers have led to a new phenomenon called an “anti-brand movement” where dissatisfied customers join together to form a group used as a tool to voice disapproval and effect change of the target corporation (Holt, 2002). These consumer groups are no longer restricted by space and time and are now connected across the world due to new communication channels provided by the Internet. Similar to brand communities, “anti-brand communities typically focus on one dominant brand or corporation and are non-geographically bound communities based on a structured set of social relationships” (Hollenbeck & Zinkhan, 2006, p.479). These activities of dissatisfied consumers can strengthen consumer power with collective actions and generate negative word-of-mouth which has an impact on other consumer’s perception of the brand (Richins, 1983).

There has been less research on online anti-brand communities than on online brand communities even though negative word of mouth communications might have a stronger influence on customers’ brand evaluations than positive word of mouth communications (Arndt, 1967; Mizerski, 1982). Thus, research exploring online anti-brand communities will give marketers useful insights into how to manage this new form of consumer-brand interaction.

This paper studies Korean online anti-brand communities. South Korea shows a remarkable enthusiasm for the Internet usage. According to International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the number of Internet users in South Korea was over

48 million or approximately 81% of South Korea's population in 2010. These statistics have contributed to the worldwide recognition of Korea as one of the leading IT countries. In addition, Korean consumers have become more empowered and eager to engage in brand activities. Korean Internet users utilize online anti-brand communities as well as online brand communities in order to get involved in particular corporations or brands. Popular Korean social network sites like Cyworld, Naver, and Daum have contributed to the increasing growth of online communities by providing consumers with an easy and standardized way to create both brand communities and anti-brand communities. Despite the significant popularity of anti-brand communities, there is a dearth of knowledge regarding this practice in South Korea. Therefore, this study will partly fulfill the demand of such knowledge through case studies of specific anti-brand communities.

The purpose of this study is to explore the nature of Korean online anti-brand communities. In order to understand the current state of Korean online anti-brand communities, this paper first describes where online anti-brand communities are created and developed and what categories of targeted products or services in online anti-brand communities are popular. Then, a case analysis will be employed to get more insights about actual consumer behaviors in online anti-brand communities in Korea. This research specifically focuses on consumer community activities including consumer interactions with other consumers and consumers' collective actions in online anti-brand communities. Since there has been scant study on online anti-brand communities, especially in Korea, this study will provide marketing practitioners and academia with better understanding of the nature of Korean online anti-brand communities. Particularly,

findings of the study will provide some managerial implications of how to effectively react to the anti-brand movement in Korea.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Online Brand Community

The marketing and advertising world has increasingly recognized the significance of brand communities because of the growing popularity of these communities. The popularity of brand communities was illustrated when one study cited 84% of Internet users have contacted at least one online community (CyberAtlas, 2001). It is becoming easier for consumers to access and join brand communities through diverse online platforms (e.g., social network sites). Even before social networking, the simple addition of the “Contact Us” button on websites went a long way towards creating dialog between consumers and the corporation. In addition to existing online brand communities on the World Wide Web, the simple process of creating brand communities in social network sites increased the popularity and growth of online brand communities. Social networking allows consumers to now communicate with each other as well as with a specific company. Facebook, one of the most popular social network sites, is a good example of the popularity of these brand communities. Some of the largest online communities include *Starbucks Coffee* (more than 16,000,000 fans), *Coca-Cola* (more than 15,000,000 fans), *Oreo* (more than 12,000,000 fans), and *Skittles* (more than 11,000,000 fans), just name a few (Harbison, 2010). More importantly, the growth rate, indicated by the number of fans, is significant. For example, the number of fans in Starbucks Coffee fan page in Facebook has increased by five times in one year; 3,100,000 fans in 2009 have become 16,000,000 fans in 2010 (Harbison, 2010). The popularity of these emerging

online brand communities emphasizes a need for increasing attention to be paid to online brand communities.

A brand community is created because a brand is not a mere symbol for consumers to identify certain products or services, but contains a special meaning attached to a good (Muniz, 1997). According to Dobni and Zinkhan (1990), Consumers see more than physical attributes and functions of products or services and look for a combined value from them. This combined value can be a sum of every aspect around the brand including its name, package, history, marketing campaign and advertisement, etc. (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). Brand communities allow consumers to reinforce their perception of the brand's value by exchanging opinions on aspects of the brand with other consumers (Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009). In addition, these consumers have the ability to easily network themselves without top-down corporate communication dominating the message. This desire to establish relationships with others who prefer the same particular brand and this consumer network for building relationships is manifested in a brand community (Fournier, 1998).

One of the most frequently used definitions of a brand community was developed by Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) to describe a brand community as “ a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand” (p. 412). A brand community is specialized by focusing on a particular brand and its non-geographically bound feature allows brand admirers to connect across diverse consumer groups. This is interesting because it represents actual brand consumers instead of less specific target demographics. According to Muniz and

O'Guinn (2001), there are three core components used to identify these brand communities in general: 1) shared consciousness, 2) evidence of rituals and traditions, and 3) a sense of moral responsibility. Shared consciousness is interpreted as a feeling of a strong connection to the brand and more importantly to other members in the community. Shared rituals and traditions refer to a sharing of the community history and stories focusing on shared consumption experiences with the brand. A sense of moral responsibility represents a duty to the community as a whole, and to individual members of the community (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Therefore, members of the brand community not only have loyalty to the community and strong connections with one another, but also are willing to share experiences, culture, and history about the brand. This causes a unique community culture to emerge from the interactions of group members.

Companies want to take advantage of brand communities to build and maintain positive relationships with their customers and to allow consumers to communicate with each other (McWilliam, 2000). Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) list three positive aspects of brand communities regarding building consumer relationships. First, as a consumer agency, brand communities enable consumers to voice their opinions. Second, brand communities provide the consumers with rich information through knowledge and information sharing among community members. Third, consumers obtain social benefit and emotional support from brand communities. All of these three aspects of brand communities contribute to an increasing usage of brand communities by companies and consumers.

With the ability of the Internet to connect people across diverse and dispersed locations, new user networks have been formed (Jones, 1999). The ease of creating brand communities in the computer-mediated environment enables consumers to actively participate in collective consumption activities with a shared loyalty to a particular brand. As a group of brand admirers, each online community is generally considered to have common value systems, norms, rules and a sense of identity and association (Fernback, 1999). Thus, it is likely that each online community possesses its own unique cultural composition including a shared collective sense of the members.

Online brand communities appear in two main formats based on who are the main agents of creating them: The first type of online brand communities is initiated by the company, defined as “firm-hosted online aggregations of customers who collectively co-product and consume content about a commercial activity that is central to their interest by exchanging intangible resources” (Wiertz & Ruyter, 2007, p. 349). Examples of firm-hosted communities are Dell, HP, iPod communities for technical supports, the Lonely Planet and Fodors community for travel-related knowledge exchanges, or Ensemble Studio’s Age of Empire community for online gaming strategies (Wiertz & Ruyter, 2007). The second is created by consumers who are considered as admirers of the brand. Examples of the second type include newsgroups dedicated to Harley-Davidson motorcycles (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995), Saab cars and Macintosh computer (Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001), and the Mini car (Pei-Ya, 2000). Regardless of who sponsors the website, most brand communities utilize online communications through



Web bulletin boards, virtual forums, and chat rooms in order to interact with others and share information and opinions on behalf of their interests in a specific brand.

Online brand communities offer a participating place where consumers share information and experiences about brands and seek help or assistance from other members. Because these activities of the brand community impact brand equity so remarkably (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001), companies have been eager to build a strong brand community as a means of enhancing their brand images or overall corporate identities. At the same time, the fact that consumers are forming their own online brand communities is more crucial for marketers when considering relationship marketing for consumers' loyalty and commitment. From a marketer's perspective, greater value would be expected from a brand with a powerful sense of community than a brand with weaker sense of community because of positive information shared among the members in the group (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001).

More specifically, the benefits of online brand communities are summarized threefold. First, online brand communities can have an impact on their members' behavior (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001) due to communications to inform and influence the members about products and brands. Second, online brand communities illuminate the needs and wants of particular consumers regarding the brand (Kozinets, 2002). Lastly, active participation in online brand communities may favor higher levels of loyalty to the particular brand around which the community is developed (Koh & Kim, 2004). The reason behind this is because the most important part of participation in these online

brand communities is the continuous use of brand products (Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005).

This social phenomenon suggests that marketers should move their thinking of brand from the traditional consumer-brand dyad to the consumer-brand-consumer triad (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001; Holt 2002). According to Muniz and O'Guinn (2001), the consumer-brand-consumer triad model gives more emphasis on relationships between consumer and consumer or consumer and brand that could be created and developed within the brand community. In addition, this model highlights the active role of consumers in the brand communities (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Cross and Smith (1995) also supported this point by explaining that the community has widened relationships with the brand to include the role of other consumers.

However, communication between consumers in online brand communities may have both positive and negative effects. Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) made a point to stress the significance of unofficial brand communities generated by consumers. In these consumer-generated brand communities, the power of consumer-to-consumer communication is strong. According to Muniz and O'Guinn (2001), a strong brand community with strong communications among consumers also can be a threat to a marketer if the community collectively rejects particular marketing activities or changes to a product or service. Because the experience in the community is a major component of the consumer experience of the brand, the instantaneous characteristics of communications in brand communities enable the consumers to spread the word and create anti-brand activities (Hollenbeck & Zinkhan, 2006; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). The

power brought to the consumers has become more targeted and stronger in either positive or negative to marketers.

### **Consumer Dissatisfaction and Complaint Behaviors**

In order for consumers' anti-brand activities to take place, Krishnamurthy and Kucuk (2009) outline two causal antecedents: "consumer empowerment" as a precondition and "consumer dissatisfaction" as a trigger. In the absence of either of the component, these cases may not occur. Consumer empowerment is defined as allowing consumers to affect brand definitions without input from the marketing team (Wathieu et al., 2002). According to O'Guinn and Muniz (2005), the company's controlling power over a brand seems to be reduced when the consumer groups eagerly get involved in a brand. The power of consumers has increased over time through knowledge disclosures, which again strengthens consumer power, especially because consumers enjoy controlling power over a brand (Foucault, 1980). Discourses of knowledge among marketers and consumers develop an environment for this power to circulate. No other instrument can be more powerful than the Internet for providing an interactive platform where both marketers and consumers can increase their power through this knowledge circulation. With a desire to be influential to a brand, these online consumers seem to be more active, participative, resistant, aggressive, playful and social than ever before (Kozinets, 1999). This consumer empowerment is a necessary condition for consumers to actively engage in brand related activities.

Activities of these empowered consumers may not always occur in a positive way. As a trigger, consumer dissatisfaction about corporations or brands leads

empowered consumers to anti-branding activities. According to Krishnamurthy and Kucuk (2009), types of consumer dissatisfaction are categorized into three categories: transactional dissatisfaction, market dissatisfaction and ideological dissatisfaction. Transactional dissatisfaction occurs from experiences with a retailer at the level of services and market dissatisfaction represents disaffection with business practices (Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009). As the broader concept than transactional and market dissatisfaction, ideological dissatisfaction is involved with the entire economic system (Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009). However, dissatisfactory aspects of corporations or brands vary and the level of dissatisfaction depends on individual consumers. Nonetheless, problems within the ordinary range of consumer knowledge and perceptions can affect the level of consumer satisfaction in a negative manner. Consumers who are dissatisfied with experiences with a brand are likely to generate consumer complaint behaviors (Singh, 1990).

These consumer complaint behaviors resulting from perceived dissatisfaction have specific objectives. According to Day (1980), the purpose of consumer complaints is classifiable into “redress seeking” (seeking specific remedies from the seller), “complaining” (communicating dissatisfaction with others by word-of-mouth communication), and “personal boycott” (discontinuing purchase of the dissatisfied product or service). Specific complaint actions of dissatisfied consumers depend on what they want to achieve through these actions taken.

Consumer complaint behaviors can be any consumer actions to convey an “expression of dissatisfaction” (Landon, 1980). Day and Landon (1977) categorized

consumer complaint behaviors at two levels. First, consumer complaint behaviors can be broadly categorized into nonbehavioral and behavioral. Nonbehavioral responses are when consumers do nothing regarding their dissatisfying experiences with a brand. On the other hand, behavioral responses are involved with overt negative actions against brands, thus these behavioral responses have been the focus of complaint behavior study. These behavioral complaint responses include “voice response” (i.e., complaint to the seller), “private response” (i.e., negative word-of-mouth communication with friends or relatives), and “third party response” (i.e., complaint to the Better Business Bureau or Federal Trade Commission) (Singh, 1990). Among these complaint responses, third party response is considered as the strongest form compared to voice and private responses (Feick, 1987) because the third party is involved when consumers believe that corporations do not respond to their complaints and that dissatisfied consumers must complain (Singh, 1988). Although categorized into three, these consumer complaint behaviors are usually shown in multiple responses such as a set of voice and private response while the most active consumers are likely to use all three responses (Singh, 1988). The second level categorization of consumer complaint behaviors is into private and public actions which are both under behavioral complaint responses (Day & Landon, 1977). Private actions include negative word-of-mouth communication to friends and relatives and an individual boycott (Singh, 1988). Some examples of public actions include complaining to the retailer or service provider to resolve problems, reporting to a consumer organization, and initiating legal actions. Day and Landon (1977) pointed out that the importance of the product or service determines whether private or public action

is taken. This means that consumers are likely to engage in public actions when dissatisfaction is related to high involvement or expensive products.

The impact of consumer complaints becomes more powerful when dissatisfied individual consumers gather together to create one voice of complaint. As a result, these consumers have formed a network against corporations or brands to support each other as an attempt to achieve their specific objective of complaints (Hollenbeck, 2005). Like the way that brand communities form, these consumer groups are created around a particular brand or corporation focusing on common detestations. Similar to brand communities, anti-brand communities target one brand or one corporation and are non-geographically bound based on a structured set of social relationships (Hollenbeck, 2005). Anti-brand communities can be created to achieve one or more purposes of complaints – redress seeking, complaining, or boycott - suggested by Day and Landon (1977). As a new form of collective anti-brand movements, anti-brand communities seem to have a more powerful impact on targeted corporations or brands than individual consumer's complaint actions. Moreover, the Internet has offered a new way for people to participate in this anti-branding movement and enabled anti-brand communities to proliferate in the online environment.

### **Online Anti-brand Community**

As mentioned above, dissatisfied consumers utilize online spaces to voice their concerns with a specific targeted brand and to share dissatisfied brand experiences with other consumers. These online spaces that focus on brand's negative aspects are called anti-brand sites. Anti-brand activities in anti-brand sites are more visible than individual

consumer's complaining behaviors because many anti-brand sites are community-oriented (Hagel & Armstrong, 1997) and facilitate collective actions against a brand (Hoffman, Novak, & Venkatesh, 2004). Some examples to generate collective actions include a forum to voice discontent, facilitate the exchange of negative brand information, organize boycotts, and coordinate lawsuits (Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009). Thus, these communities are powerful when considering the number of participants of certain actions initiated by aggrieved consumers.

Dissatisfied consumers now have technology-driven action strategies using the Internet as a quick medium to voice their concerns to worldwide audiences. Consumers who have experienced dissatisfactions willingly join and participate in anti-branding sites because the online environment usually provides anonymity to the consumers who create anti-brand sites and support the purpose of these sites (Bailey, 2004). Interestingly, Bailey (2004) found that participants of these online anti-brand sites are not only consumers, but also current and former employees. Consumers are not limited to obtaining negative information from consumer themselves, but from disgruntled employees with inside information about the corporation or brand. Therefore, the virtually unlimited information exchange among such a broad range of participants in the anti-brand sites generates more force than previous social movements.

Anti-branding activities on the Internet broadly fall into three categories: anti-brand communities, complaint forums, and product evaluation forums (Bailey, 2004; Harrison-Walker, 2001). Although all of these three types provide consumers with a platform to allow social interactions among dissatisfied consumers, it is clear that they have different

purposes and structures (Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009). Complaint forums are public or private online spaces where consumers can post their complaints about a transaction with a company or brand (Bailey, 2004; Harrison-Walker, 2001). These complaints posted by dissatisfied consumers benefit other consumers in that other consumers can take this information into their purchase decisions with a specific company or brand. From marketer's perspective, complaint forums are where the company can obtain opinions of their customers from these comments. Product evaluation forums are where consumers post their evaluations of the quality of a product or service that they already have experienced (Mayzlin & Chevalier, 2006). As one form of electronic word-of-mouth (Mayzlin & Chevalier, 2006), product reviews help other consumers reduce the uncertainty of their purchases and improve the efficiency of their product or service search (Hennig-Thurau & Walsh, 2003). Compared to these two types, anti-brand websites work within a broader context. While complaint forums focus on transactional dissatisfaction and product evaluation forums focus on product or service quality, anti-brand sites focus on affecting consumption patterns of other consumers by creating a negative brand identity (Wolrich, 2005). In terms of dissatisfied aspects of the targeted brand, anti-brand sites are likely to deal with a wider range of brand issues, such as cultural, political, or technological subjects, in order to damage brand identities (Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009).

Research on word-of-mouth communication suggests anti-brand communities as a platform for propagating negative information about corporations and brands could have serious consequences (Richins, 1983; Singh, 1990). Keller (1993) states these anti-brand



communities can create a negative impact on brand values through negative online presence, affecting the favorability and uniqueness of brand associations. In terms of the favorability, this negative impact of online anti-brand communities is strong enough to create “negative shelves” (Ogilvie, 1987) which lead consumers to brand rejection. According to Ogilvie (1987), these negative shelves (what consumers dislike) are more influential to the consumers’ decision-making process than positive shelves (what consumers like). Related to the uniqueness of brands, anti-brand communities result in diffusing the brand identity. Anti-brand communities help to create the “doppelganger brand image”, a confusing brand identity from diverse online presences, which makes consumers intentionally avoid the targeted brand (Thompson, Rindfleisch, & Arsel, 2006).

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Regarding online anti-brand communities, there are many pressing questions to be investigated. The goals of this paper are an attempt to investigate the current state of Korean anti-brand communities and to obtain a larger picture of consumer behaviors in online anti-brand communities. Specific research questions are as follows:

**RQ1:** What kinds of online platforms are primarily employed by dissatisfied Korean consumers to establish online anti-brand communities and how do they differ?

As mentioned above, the two most significant online sources of anti-brand communities are social network sites and private web sites with their own domains. Even though they both are created for the same purpose of gathering a negative voice of consumers, it is assumed that anti-brand communities on each platform would differ by showing different characteristics.

**RQ2:** What major categories of targeted products or services trigger empowered consumers to engage in anti-brand communities?

Not every brand suffers from consumer anti-branding activities on the Internet. In order for consumers to create online anti-brand communities, there must be certain dissatisfying aspects of the products or services. A specific objective of each anti-brand community would differ from one another, but common characteristics of these targeted products or services might be found among online anti-brand communities.

**RQ3:** What are patterns of consumer interactions that occur in online anti-brand communities?

Online anti-brand communities are online spaces where dissatisfied consumers share their experiences with the brand and exchange information. The unique environment on the Internet should provide consumers with communications tools that are similar with but different from traditional ones in the offline environment. These new communication channels in online anti-brand communities would affect the way consumers interact with other community members. As a new form of boycott and protest, anti-brand communities allow consumer to gather together to voice their opinions about targeted brands (Singh, 1990). Ever increasing consumer power resulted from the advent of the Internet would have a stronger impact on brands when consumer groups initiate collective actions through communities (Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009). There are expected to be diverse forms of collective actions in anti-brand communities.

**RQ4:** What collective actions by dissatisfied consumer groups can be found in online anti-brand communities?

## **METHOD**

In order to understand the current state of Korean online anti-brand communities, it is important to utilize a broad and through computerized search to cover the existing anti-brand communities. Search engines are possibly the best search tools to create a list of existing anti-brand communities. Particular search engines are chosen based on the rank information from Korean Click, which provides up-to-dated website ranking data by categories. As of October, 2010, the data shows that the three most popular search engines are Naver, Daum, and Cyworld, and each website also offers online spaces where consumers gather together to create brand communities under the name of Café. These three search engines provide search results of online communities housed both on private domains and the search engine's own sites. The specific search term used is "Anti" (both in English and Korean) because it is considered the most suitable word to identify online anti-brand communities. Other search terms, such as "Against" and "No," were also used, but "Anti" search results focused more on a particular brand while other search terms generated online communities focused on social issues or phenomena. This study only includes online communities specifically focusing on a particular product, service, or brand.

When possible anti-brand communities have been identified, they are categorized according to criteria that are specifically suitable to the investigation. For the comparison between anti-brand communities on different online platforms, acquired anti-brand communities are categorized into two groups according to where they are housed; either on private domains or on social networking sites. Then, product and service categories

are studied to explore what characteristics of targeted products and services are popular in online anti-brand communities.

In order to discover the patterns of member interactions and collective actions, non-participant online observation is employed to provide detailed description of how people act, what they are saying, in what type of groupings, who are those people, and how are they behaving in different settings of each community. Other elements observed on anti-brand communities include the websites' layout, entrance, signage, and other aspects of the environment or consumption setting.

In total three online anti-brand communities are explored – one each from a privately hosted website, Naver Café, and Daum Café. Each anti-brand community is selected based on Kozinets (2002)'s recommended criteria in choosing suitable online communities: 1) large numbers of discrete message posters 2) high traffic of postings, 3) more between-member interactions.

## OVERVIEW OF ONLINE ANTI-BRAND COMMUNITIES

### Current State of Korean Anti-brand communities

Korean anti-brand communities appear either in social networking sites or in privately hosted domain. According to Korean Click, as of November in 2010, the three most popular social networking sites in Korea are Naver (more than 31,120,000 visitors), Daum (more than 28,600,000 visitors), and Cyworld (more than 24,400,000 visitors) in order of the popularity. User demographics seem to vary depending on characteristics and services offered in each social networking site (see Table 1).

Table 1.

*Service Features and Main Target Audiences of Korean Social Networking Sites*

<b>www.naver.com</b> NHN Corp.	<b>Major services</b>	Search engine, Ji-Sik-In ('Man of Knowledge' – Yahoo adapted this service as its 'Yahoo Answers'), Naver blog, Naver Café (community), News.
	<b>Other services</b>	Local news, Finance, Career, Mobile, Online games
	<b>Main target</b>	Males in late 20's with a moderate economic power
<b>www.daum.net</b> Daum Communications	<b>Major services</b>	Café (community), Hanmail (e-mail), Daum shopping, Daum Direct (Insurance)
	<b>Other services</b>	Search engine, Daum blog, Media, Finance
	<b>Main target</b>	Males in mid 30's – late 30's
<b>www.cyworld.com</b> SK Communications	<b>Major services</b>	Mini hompy (mini-homepage), Cyworld club (community), Melon (mobile + web music), Blog, NateOn messenger (#1 in South Korea)
	<b>Other services</b>	Shopping, media, search engine
	<b>Main target</b>	Females in 10's and 20's

Source: A commercial report 'Inside Cyworld – best practices from South Korea's leading online community' by Plus Eight Star Ltd. (2006).

All three Korean social networking sites feature online communities even though they are under different names- Naver Café, Daum Café or Cyworld Club (see Figure 1). Despite the fact that Cyworld is one of the most popular social networking sites in Korea, Cyworld Club is excluded in this study because anti-communities in Cyworld mostly focus on celebrities or social phenomenon (i.e. anti candlelight vigil). Therefore, the investigation on Korean anti-brand communities only explores Naver Café, Daum Café, and World Wide Web sites.



Figure 1. Main pages of communities in Korea's top three social networking sites

The search word “Anti” found a total number of 44 online anti-brand communities that focus on specific brands in Naver Café (15), Daum Café (13), and on the World Wide Web (16). Online communities in social networking sites show the number of community members. The average number of members who joined these anti-

brand communities is 1,566 with the smallest number of 7 members and the largest number of 9,340 members.

### **Anti-brand communities on the World Wide Web and Social Networking Sites**

While anti-brand communities on privately hosted sites are completely flexible with options like creating webpage menus, those in social networking sites have limited options within already formatted menus, layouts, and systems. Social networking sites usually require community members to register to these sites to have IDs even though these IDs do not have to be actual names in both Naver and Daum. The creator of the anti-brand community is shown on the main page and he/she has an ultimate control over the whole community system ranging from members to contents. As an administrator, the creator has an option to show contents to community members with different levels of activities. While some communities in social networking sites allow any visitor to browse contents without registering to the communities, others require visitors to register to communities and show minimum activities (i.e. posting a self-introduction to other community members) to access certain contents. Because the use of nicknames offers a level of anonymity to those who create anti-brand communities and visit these communities, registered community members are assumed to show more respect to each other and have more loyalty to the communities compared to the total anonymity system. Online communities in social networking sites have a system of showing the number of community members and counting the number of total postings and current postings. This system offers information about overall popularity of certain online communities. Both Naver Café and Daum Café have their own system to indicate the popularity based



on the number of community members and the level of member' activities; Naver categorizes Café into 8 groups and Daum assigns specific ranking numbers to each online community (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. Anti Café search results with community information

Compared to online communities in social networking sites, those on their own domain have more freedom regarding website menus, layouts, and systems. Therefore, webpage layouts are more diverse with flexible page menus (see Figure 3).



Figure 3. Diversity of community webpage layouts in World Wide Web

Creators of anti-brand communities on private domains are sometimes anonymous. For example, Anti-SKT (one of major wireless carriers in Korea) community does not offer any information about the creator; the only information that visitors can obtain from the webpage is creator's e-mail address. Anti-brand communities usually start from one single dissatisfied consumer, but sometimes create a group of interested consumers who act as administrators in communities. Considering the complexity of building online communities, creators of anti-brand communities on private websites are likely to be more motivated to voice their opposition against a particular corporation or brand. Unlike social networking sites, the setting up your own website requires more effort from community creators to build anti-brand communities, such as creating an actual webpage or securing domains. Moreover, once these communities are created in the World Wide Web, creators are responsible to maintain communities (i.e. paying a fee to keep domain names). Visitors are usually not required to register to participate in these communities and not limited to contents. However, when creating a post in communities,

visitors need to put names, either actual or nick names, and an instant password for the purpose of managing their posts (i.e. modification or removal). There is no standard system to indicate the popularity of these anti-brand communities on the World Wide Web, but some communities feature a counting menu to show the number of the total visitors, and visitors of today and yesterday.

### **Categories of Targeted Products or Services**

Targeted products or services in the total 44 online anti-brand communities are divided into 14 categories; wireless/cable services, automobile, electronic products, large corporations, clothing, newspapers, insurance, food, apartments, games, websites, resorts, airlines, and delivery services (see Figure 4). Wireless and cable services (7), Automobiles (6), and Electronics (6) are top three categories of the targeted products and services in anti-brand communities. In the category of large corporations (5), anti-brand communities target affiliates as well as headquarters. For example, the anti WoongJin community features menus divided into its affiliates – WoongJin Coway (water purifier), ThinkBig (education), Cuchen (rice cooker), and Mco Digital (air cleaner). Even though the purpose of creating anti-brand communities varies depending on categories, similar complaints are shown in anti-brand communities within each category. Complaint details in the top three categories of targeted products and services are shown in Table 2.

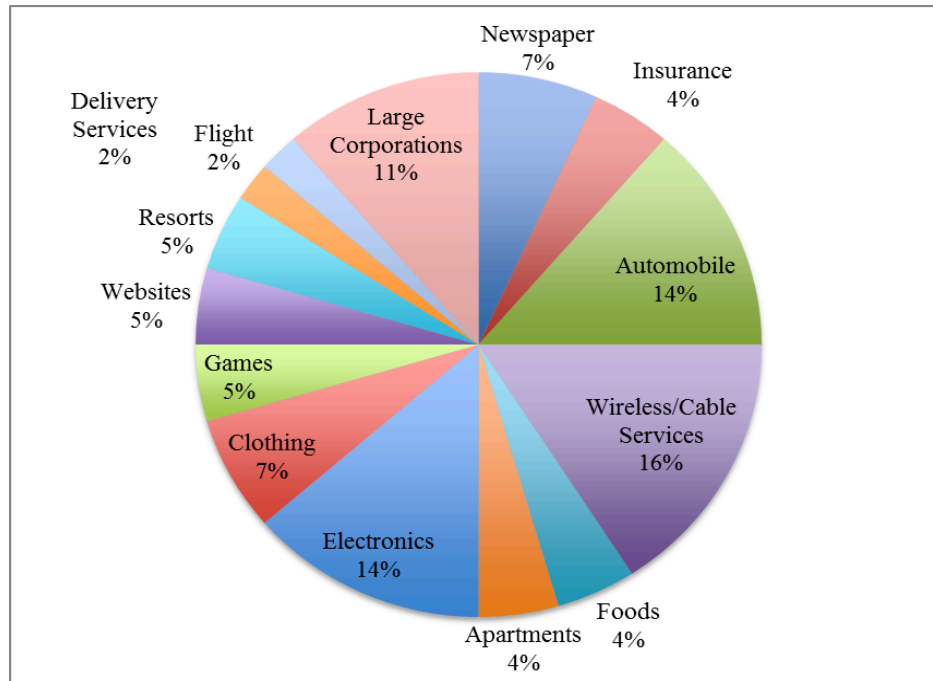


Figure 4. Categories of the targeted brands in online anti-brand communities

Table 2.

Complaint Details of Top Three Categories in Anti-brand Communities

Category	Complaint Details	Example Communities
<b>Wireless/Cable</b>	Service quality, service plan, privacy, customer services, subsidy to mobile phone purchase	Anti Powercom, Anti KT, Anti SKTelecom, Anti Sky Life
<b>Automobile</b>	Product defects, malfunction, customer services, practices of salesperson	Anti Ssangyong, Anti Kia, Anti Equos, Anti Rezzo, Anti Chrysler
<b>Electronics</b>	Product defects, customer services, refusal to refund	Anti Anam television, LG electronics, Anti Bontec, Anti Anicall

## CASE ANALYSIS

### **Case 1: Naver Café - Anti WOW (World of Warcraft) Boycott Café**

The World of Warcraft (WOW) boycott Café (<http://cafe.naver.com/wowp>) was created in January 2005 (see Figure 5). WOW is a massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG) created by Blizzard Entertainment, one of the leading makers of computer games. WOW, as well as other Blizzard titles Starcraft and Diablo are especially popular in Korea. The purpose of this anti WOW Café is to boycott WOW mainly because Blizzard has set a higher price on WOW in the Korean market (\$23.75) compared to its U.S. market (\$14.99). Users have complained about an unstable game server, mentioning that they usually do not receive any notice from Blizzard ahead of a down server. According to a post created by the community creator regarding customer service, a request for a product refund was rejected by Blizzard and complaint postings in the official company website were removed without any resolution. The community members insist that they are normal consumers who created the anti WOW café after they attempted to resolve their problems with Blizzard. Since 2005, the anti WOW café has more than 9,000 members which is the most members among anti-brand Cafés in Naver. With a total of 29,000 posts, this community has been active despite a recent decrease in members' activities after a newer version of the game product came out. This anti-brand community is expected to help to explore how community members interact with others to achieve common goals within the community because of the long period of time the anti brand community has been active.



Figure 5. The main page of the anti WOW Café

Member interactions are mostly conducted through posts and comments in discussion boards which are specifically divided by topic – related press releases, member opinions, supporting data, negative brand experiences, etc. The creator of this anti-brand community uses a nickname “Blueharp” and does not offer any personal information in his/her profile. The community creator is in charge of maintaining the community and creating group actions within the community. In order to explain the existence of the community, one post by the community creator explains why the community was created and what they want from Blizzard- a reasonable price and better customer service. This post helps visitors and members find the community’s policies set by the community creator. The policy was created to effectively achieve the community’s goal by focusing on the WOW product boycott. The community creator emphasizes that

this community only wants to improve customer services as well as to ask for a reasonable price. Therefore, this community, according to the policy, does not allow any posts related to commercial purposes, extremely emotional/aggressive comments, demand for no cost of WOW, or other gaming products other than WOW. The contents in the anti WOW community are open to the general public, but membership is required to upload posts. From the postings, it appears that community members are mostly computer gamers and owners of PC rooms - places that allow the public to use computers at certain costs. Because owners of PC rooms are the ones who purchase the WOW product for commercial purposes, they tend to focus more on price changes while computer gamers focus on factors like unstable servers effecting the gaming environment.

In addition to interacting with other members through discussion boards, the anti WOW Café has a unique culture focused on spreading negative messages about the WOW product and practices of Blizzard. The community members create anti WOW posters and upload them in the community. These posters usually mimic famous movie posters to deliver catchy messages supporting the purpose of the community (see Figure 6). More than 500 of these posters or cartoons have been posted in this community.



Figure 6. Anti WOW posters created by the community members

In terms of collective actions created in the community, the community started a signature-seeking campaign for a petition requesting a name, e-mail address, permanent address, and opinions. Since January 2005, more than 9,000 members participated in the campaign and received a confirmation comment from the community creator. After gathering signatures from the community members, the community creator delivered them to Blizzard Entertainment Korea located in South Korea. Despite the efforts of these consumers, a couple of reports about the visit to the company mentioned that reactions from the Blizzard were not positive and showed no progress regarding the price change and unstable server problems. Along with the petition, the anti WOW community reported WOW and Blizzard Entertainment to the Korean Consumer Protection Board. Even though anti-branding activities by the anti WOW Café did not seem to achieve its specific goals over a long period of time, this community succeed in generating group actions from dissatisfied consumers and taking an active approach engaging with the company and a third party to resolve the problems.

### **Case 2: Daum Café- Anti Ssangyong Motors Café**

Ssangyong Motors is the fourth largest automobile manufacturer in South Korea, offering approximately 16 models. The anti Ssangyong Café (<http://cafe.daum.net/antissangyongBK>) has the most community members (more than 7,700) among Daum anti-brand Cafés (see Figure 7). The anti Ssangyong Café started in June 2004 and focuses on customer/repair services. After another anti Ssangyong community disappeared, this anti-brand community started in hope of reorganizing dissatisfied consumers of Ssangyong. According to a post, the previous anti Ssangyong



community had more than 20,000 members, but the creator of this community closed the community after receiving monetary compensation from Ssangyong Motors. Since this previous anti Ssangyong community disappeared and new models of Ssangyong Motors came out, the power of dissatisfied consumers of Ssangyong Motors became weaker. The community creator - Kamio - started this community to revitalize community activities against Ssangyong Motors, especially their customer/repair services. This community requires membership to view the contents. The membership is divided into three levels; the first level is upon the registration to the community; the second level requires self-introduction post (the vehicle model, year of make, mileage, and comments); the third level requires attending at least two offline community meetings.



Figure 7. The main page of the Anti Ssangyong Café

The anti Ssangyong community offers a place for community members to share their negative experiences and useful information regarding customer and repair services.

Discussion boards are basically categorized into information sharing and offline meetings. On the top list in the discussion board for automobile information, a posting under the subject of “the best and worst repair service shops” allows community members to leave comments based on their experiences. This information enables other community members to obtain useful information regarding automobile repair services. In the discussion board for Q&As about Ssangyong Motors, the community members seek general answers about their problems from other consumers. The most active online interactions in this anti community are through these two discussion boards. According to the greeting post by the community creator, the major purpose of the anti Ssangyoung community is to exchange useful information among the community members, rather than to generate anti-branding activities against Ssangyong Motors. The community creator also mentioned that he/she still loves his Ssangyong car and only hopes to obtain better customer/repair services.

An interesting aspect of the anti Ssangyong Café is that the community members often have offline meetings, such as an off-road camping (see Figure 8). These offline meetings do not aim to generate anti-branding activities, rather the primary purpose is to increase a feeling of belongingness to the community. Even though the last offline meeting occurred in 2007, there were more than 12 meetings. Offline meetings took place mostly in Pusan areas in South Korea, but also other locations in rural areas, like Muju. In offline meetings, the community members use their nicknames that they use in the community. According to the epilog comments, the offline meeting participants enjoyed gathering together to share experiences with their vehicles. Some activities included

camping, off-road driving, traveling, tuning vehicles, and simply socializing in a bar. These offline meetings in the anti Ssangyong community are interesting because these kinds of offline meetings are often found in brand communities, such as the Harley-Davidson brand community. The members of the Harley-Davidson brand community form small groups based on geographic areas and regularly meet together with so-called Harley-Davidson club friends for recreational rides, attend club meetings, to socialize in pubs, etc. In this context, the anti Ssangyong community shows characteristics of a brand community especially when considering that participation in brand-related activities increase consumers' attachment to the brand (McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig, 2002).

Because the main purpose of the anti Ssangyong Café is information/experience sharing, this anti-brand community does not take an aggressive approach to complain to Ssangyong Motors or to improve customer/repair centers. Despite the large number of the community members, the anti Ssangyong community seems to passively respond to low quality customer/repair services by finding where they can receive better services among the available service centers.



*Figure 8. Offline meetings in the anti Ssangyong community*

### **Case 3: Anti Kia Motors Community**

As the second largest automobile manufacturer in Korea, Kia Motors offers approximately 19 models including commercial models. The anti Kia online community (<http://www.anticarens.co.kr>) first started in 2002 to complain about Carens, a specific model of Kia Motors, and extended to the whole Kia motors brand in 2003 (see Figure 9). Thus, the focus of the community was on Carens, but now consumer complaints covers almost every model manufactured by Kia Motors. Most complaints focus on safety issues from defects and malfunctions which are considered important to consumers. Consumers are not satisfied with Kia Motors' policy regarding these defects and frequent malfunctions. According to posts in the anti Kia community, consumers have

experienced a refusal to a recall or to service requests from serious defects. Community members also report spending a large amount of money and time to fix the problems at their own cost. The reason behind Kia Motors' refusal is usually an expired warranty even though consumers believe that defects of automobiles are caused from the manufacturing process. Particular models come up frequently in these defect reports. Examples of these models include Carens, Spectra, Carnival, Sephia, Sorento, and Sportage.



Figure 9. The main page of the anti Kia community

The community creator, Mi-Yang Choi, started this anti-brand community and gathered people to voice their complaints against Kia Motors after experiencing a serious accident. A fire broke out in her Carens while parking and Kia Motors shifted the

responsibility of this accident to the driver. Although the number of community members is not presented on the anti Kia webpage, the main page shows the total number of visitors – slightly more than 190,000 consumers visited the community as of November 2010. Since its creation in 2002, the anti Kia community has been active with diverse approaches to resolve problems with Kia Motors.

The most active interaction channel among the community members is through discussion boards. Discussion boards are broadly divided into community notices, a signature-seeking campaign for a petition, accident reports, a free board, press release, information center, and links to other communities. The community members report defects in their automobiles and share their experiences through a discussion board. Specific details of the defects are posted often with pictures as a proof (see Figure 10). Community members are encouraged to use their actual names, a car model, plate number, mileage, etc, thus the community representative requests repair services as well as gathers these complaint reports to send to Kia Motors by faxing these documentations.



Figure 10. Example of the accident reports posted by the community member

Regarding collective actions, the anti Kia community also started a signature-seeking campaign for a petition. As of November 2010, more than 1760 members participated in the campaign to request accident compensation and improve customer services. Beyond online activities, the community members planned two group demonstrations for consumer rights and one offline meeting. Specific time and locations for the demonstrations were only informed to the members who contacted the community creator with an intention to participate. According to posts after the demonstrations, this collective action did not meet expectations considering that only 4 members and 9 members showed up in each case. However, the offline meeting was held among active members of three anti-brand communities related to automobiles (Antikia, Caras, and Kupbaljin). The purpose of the offline meeting was to strengthen the consumer power by planning cooperative strategies among the anti-brand communities. The meeting agenda includes board member formation, webpage advertisement, and promotional efforts. Examples of promotion efforts decided upon include calendars and bumper stickers. While few members participated in offline group actions, other community members supported them and showed appreciation through posting comments in the community.

One of the approaches that the anti Kia community takes is to engage in mass media. The community members have tried to contact mass media to bring up their issues at the societal level. As a result, the issue about automobile defects/malfunctions and unfair responses of the automobile makers were aired in Sisa Magazine, a famous Korean television show reporting current society issues. In addition, a Korean traffic broadcasting radio station interviewed a couple of the anti Kia community members and

addressed this issue. Even though these media mentions covered all kinds of automobile brands, not limited to Kia Motors, it is obvious that the group of consumers is more powerful than one individual in garnering attention.

Kia Motors responded to some of the requests by the anti Kia community. Comments under the complaint postings indicate that certain cases were resolved with Kia Motors. It is assumed that Kia Motors recognized the significant impact of this anti-brand community on the brand because they officially tried to resolve the problem with the community creator. Kia Motors and the community creator made a written agreement which is uploaded on the website (see Figure 11). From this document, Kia Motors promised to offer monetary compensation (\$10,000) to the community creator for the fire accident on her automobile. Kia Motors asked the creator to discontinue any forms of anti-branding activities against Kia Motors. In addition, Kia Motors attempted to take over the anti Kia community by asking the creator to give the right of running the community to Kia Motors. The creator seems to take a risk for still running the community and leading anti-branding activities because this document is legally binding. It is assumed that the creator was not satisfied with Kia Motor's reaction which did not happen immediately happened after her accident; Kia Motors responded after the community creator became actively involved with anti-branding activities. The anti Kia community still generates collective actions against Kia Motors even though some of the members' requests have been resolved. The community creator is a huge contributor who helps other consumers who have experienced similar accidents with Kia Motors.



## 합 의 서

### 1. 고객 및 차량재원

자 루	고객명	차 량 번 호	자 대 번 호	출 하 일	주행거리	비 고
9월	최 미 양	서울 800 8799	KUARD 322-1 A01886	09.08.11	25.000	

### 2. 제 목 : 주차장 차량화재에 의한 차량전소건

### 3. 내 용

상기건과 관련하여 기아자동차주와 상기고객은 아래와 같이 합의합니다.

1)기아자동차주는 상기건과 관련하여 고객보조 및 피해보상 차원에서 ₩ 9,000,000 (구백십만원정기)를 보상해주기로 약속하며,

2)항주 상기고객은 상기건과 관련하여 더 이상 어떠한 이의제기(인,형사상 포함) 및 회사의 명예를 훼손시키는 행위(인터넷상 비방, 시위 등)를 하지 않을 것을 합의합니다.  
만일, 회사에 해가되는 행위에 의해 발생하는 모든 책임은 상기고객(최미양)이 책임질 것을 약속합니다.

3)현재 운영되고있는 사이트(Anticarens.co.kr & Carens.co.kr)도 더 이상 운영지 않을 것이며, 사이트 운영권을 타인(김현성)에게 넘길 것을 약속합니다.

4. 일 자 : 2009. 9. 25

5. 합 의 자: 기아자동차주

상기고객: 최 미 양  
(주민등록번호: )  
(주소: 서울 )

Figure 11. The written agreement between Kia Motors and the community creator

## **DISCUSSION**

The case analysis of online anti-brand communities has allowed me to describe detailed member interactions and collective actions within these anti-brand communities. The findings of this study show that three core components of the brand community: shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001) are also found in the anti-brand communities. The members of anti-brand communities show shared consciousness whether they officially join the community or not. Even though it is assumed that membership might increase a feeling of belonging to the community, mutual goals of the anti-brand communities connect the community members with each other. A bond of sympathy is developed between members of the community from similar experiences with brands. Due to this shared consciousness, the community members behave as if they know each other even though most of them have never met. As an individual consumer, community members appreciate contributions of the community creators and support other members for anti-branding activities like offline meetings and group strikes. The anti-brand communities in this study have rituals and traditions. For example, each community has its own policy mostly developed by the community creator, but presumably agreed by the community members. The community members follow the policy which largely determines the community cultures. For example, anti WOW community prohibits extremely aggressive/emotional comments or other game product-related comments. This policy reinforces the purpose of the community as well as maintains a peaceful approach to resolving problems. Diversity of discussion boards also allows the community members to create cultures; anti WOW

posters can be shared through that particular section created by the community creator. Offline meetings, especially in the anti Ssangyong community, are one example that shows rituals and traditions. Even though their offline meetings reflect the characteristics of the brand communities, it is obvious that this community has their own culture based on a common interest in automobiles. According to Muniz and O'Guinn (2001), a sense of moral responsibility generates collective actions and enhances group cohesion. This sense of moral responsibility is shown in anti-brand communities when considering that collective actions against a particular brand or corporation are witnessed in anti-brand communities. One example of these collective actions is a signature-seeking campaign for petitions. In order for the community's goal to be achieved, the community members willingly participate in the campaign and the number of participants reached the thousands. In addition to moral responsibility to the community, the community members extend their responsibility into the societal level to decrease the number of victims who will have the same negative experiences as well to help other members who already have experienced similar cases. The creator of the anti Kia community is one example that shows moral responsibility at the higher level because she still actively leads the anti Kia community even after her personal problem was resolved.

In anti-brand communities, the role of the community creator has a significant importance. From creating the community to leading community members, community creators are responsible for setting a specific goal and activities to achieve this goal. From the comparison of anti-brand communities between social networking sites and private domains, the level of creators' motivations would be different when considering a

different amount of efforts to build online communities. It is assumed that highly motivated creators on private domains are more eager to inform negative opinions about their brand experiences and make a louder voice against a brand with a group of like-minded consumers. In addition, the community creators are the ones who mainly determine community activities and culture. For example, although both the anti Ssangyong Café and the anti Kia community are both against automobile makers, community activities and cultures seem different due to their own purpose set by the community creators. While the creator of the anti Ssangyong Café was upset about poor customer/repair services offered by Ssangyong Motors, the creator of the anti Kia community was outraged at the life-threatening accident. Thus, the purposes of these communities focus on different aspects; the anti Ssangyong Café for improving service qualities and the anti Kia community for complaining about defects/malfunctions and requesting reasonable services or monetary compensation. As a result, the anti Kia community takes a more aggressive approach to dealing with problems compared to the anti Ssangyong Café.

The findings of this case study show one thing in common. The power of consumers increases through the formation of consumer groups. The effective communication channel connecting dissatisfied consumers allows anti-brand groups to convey their message in a stronger way as a group. From the case of anti Kia community, the consumer group started from one individual consumer against one particular automobile brand, but extended to thousands of people versus the whole Kia Motors company. Moreover, consumer power in this category has become stronger through joint

efforts (i.e., joint offline meetings) with other automobile-related communities. Because the Internet enables dissatisfied consumers to easily connect to each other and generate collective actions against brands or corporations, the number of anti-brand communities and the kinds of anti-branding activities are expected to grow. Therefore, marketers should recognize the importance of anti-brand communities and better respond to dissatisfied consumers before and after these anti-brand communities are created.

### **Marketing Implications**

As anti-brand communities have grown, marketers are confronted with difficult problems. One of these problems is that marketers lose control over information shared among their consumers. Through the Internet, negative information spreads faster without any geographic or time limitations. This can affect other consumers' perception and purchasing decisions of the targeted brand. In the past, some corporations prevented consumers from using certain domain names, such as "anti-Samsung" by buying out this domain. However, this trick has limitations because of the existence of social networking sites. Online communities in social networking sites offer virtually unlimited options to consumers to gather together to voice their concerns regarding brands or corporations. Therefore, corporations should not avoid dealing with dissatisfied consumers, but provide fundamental resolutions to these consumers.

From the case analysis, we learned that community creators and members mentioned that they already attempted to resolve problems with the brands at individual levels before forming the consumer groups in anti-brand communities. Based on the study, it seems that there are three stages regarding consumer actions of the anti-brand

communities; individual consumer complaints, a formation of the anti-brand community, and the third party involvement. It is ideal for marketers to respond to the issues when these issues stay at the individual level. Even when anti-brand communities are created, marketers should immediately react to offer resolutions before community activities against brands become out of control. One option would be to try to incorporate the anti-brand community into the corporation's message boards to try and exert more control and appear more sensitive to consumers' issues. The negative impact of brands increases when anti-branding activities of community members become more visible through mass media or third party involvements (i.e., The Consumer Protection Board).

From another angle, anti-brand communities can be opportunities for marketers to better identify consumers' needs and reflect on their opinions. Because anti-brand communities give instant feedback to marketers, marketers should take advantage of using honest opinions from anti-brand communities. Generally, marketers should realize the fact that brand communities and anti-brand communities are equally important in maintaining or improving their brand. As many strategies and tactics have been developed in the areas of utilizing brand communities as a marketing tool, marketers should strive for better management of their dissatisfied consumers and anti-brand communities.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

This study has some limitations that leave areas to be explored by future research. The biggest limitation is that the findings of this study lack of an ability to be generalized due to a small number of cases. Because the study method is case analysis, only three

anti-brand communities are chosen and studied based on a popularity and member interaction levels. Moreover, two cases belong to the automobile maker category- Ssangyon and Kia. Even though this study on these two anti-brand communities in the same category enables us to compare some aspects, future study is in need to expand study areas into other diverse categories to determine whether this study is universally applicable to other anti-brand communities.

In addition, this study employed a case analysis method which relies on observation and interpretation. This study method enables us to explore observable behavioral factors of anti-brand community members, but not to deeply understand motivations behind certain behaviors, such as motivation to create the anti-brand community or to participate in collective actions against brands or corporations. In order to obtain comprehensive knowledge of anti-brand communities, it seems important to understand why some dissatisfied consumers create/participate in anti-brand communities and why others do not.

Finally, this study focuses on a description of anti-branding activities that take place on the Internet. A variety of anti-brand activities used by anti-brand communities were shown to increase the power of consumer groups. However, the impact of these anti-branding activities within online anti-brand communities is not discovered in this study. Future research is needed to determine how these anti-brand communities have the negative impact on brands or corporations.

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